

Discovery

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Summary: Hiccup hasn't learned anything today, but Astrid seems to be making some interesting discoveries. He just can't figure out what they are.

Discovery

**\_\*\*Discovery\*\*\_**

**\*\*DISCLAIMER:\*\*** Seriously need to stop writing these perspective fics. They're fun to write, but not always clearâ€|

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><p>It had been a long day. Just another day on Berk, where nothing much really happened. They'd spent the morning studying how each dragon was built differently, with their wings and movements. They'd even convinced Snotlout and the twins to help by calling it stealth training (somehow). The afternoon had been real stealth training with Gobber, all of them trying to cross a bridge from underneath. Then Hiccup had gone with him back to the forge and helped make greatswords.<p>

It hadn't been a bad day, but the hours dragged. As things changed, Hiccup found he actually more enjoyed the days when bad things happened. Not because he liked being in danger, but because they always went by so fast, and he learned so much, every time. Even if it was just something stupid, like Snotlout actually being good for something.

Dragons aside, he didn't feel like he'd learned anything today.

Until Astrid showed up.

She'd stopped when she first came in, and just stared, until Hiccup

started to feel self-conscious. He'd looked at Toothless for confirmation nothing was wrong, then realised who he was asking and went to Gobber instead.

"Do I have stuff on my face, or something?" he whispered urgently, and Gobber looked him over critically.

"Coal dust."

He grimaced, but there wasn't much he could really do about that. Besides, Astrid was usually more of a mess than he was, so that couldn't be it. He gave it up for a lost cause and went back to Astrid, who was still staring, though now her focus was a bit lower, closer to his shoulder. He rubbed it self-consciously, realised he'd let his shirt fall open over his collarbone, and hastily pulled it straight again. Astrid's eyes snapped back to his face like she'd been startled.

"Hiccup. Hi."

"Hi, Astrid," he said slowly, rethreading the leather ties he'd loosened in the heat. "You're here late."

"Iâ€¦ yes. I wanted toâ€¦ there'sâ€¦"

Her eyes were wandering again, but they were weirdly focussed. He looked down at his shirt, but all he could see was the faint outline of where his apron had shielded him from the dust, which wasn't \_that\_ weird. Maybe she was thinking.

"Astrid?" he prompted, and she jerked again.

"Dinner. They're serving dinner in the Great Hall. A celebration."

He frowned and looked at Gobber, who clicked his fingers. "Of course! Catgut was going to ask Marrowgouger to marry him! She must have said yes."

"Catgut and Marrowgouger," Hiccup repeated dryly. "Now that sounds like a happy family in the making."

"Well, best go and join the celebration!" Gobber said cheerfully, throwing the half-finished greatsword onto the bench. He unscrewed his smith's hammer and held out the other hand expectantly, while Hiccup grabbed his mug off the wall and threw it to him. As he clicked it into place, he narrowed his eyes at the two teenagers, then beamed in a way that was utterly transparent. "I think I'll go ahead. Astrid, you're welcome to stay while Hiccup tidies up, if you'd like."

Hiccup could only stare at him incredulouslyâ€"was that supposed to be subtle matchmaking, or something? Like watching Hiccup clean up the forge was \_appealing\_!â€"but Astrid just made a noise that was sort of like an affirmation, and Gobber pointed to Toothless.

"You, dragon, you're in the way. Let's go."

"He's not â€" Hiccup began, but Toothless shot him the closest a dragon could come to a knowing smirk and sauntered out after Gobber.

Hiccup could only gape at their backs, wondering if he'd forgotten some romantic holiday. It couldn't be just the engagement, right? What, was he supposed to be getting ideas?

He inwardly snorted. Like Astrid would fall for something like that.

But, either way, she didn't seem to mind, so he just rolled his eyes and offered her an apologetic shrug before starting the oh-so glamorous job of cleaning out the forge waste. "So, Astrid, you seem kinda thoughtful tonight. Something on your mind?"

"My what?" she asked, and jumped when he looked at her again. "Oh, right. No. Just... um... well, obviously, I just... Do you... always get this... dirty, in the forge?"

So it was the dust. He blushed, absently swiping at his cheek. "Oh, n-no. Well, yeah. When we're crafting, it's kind of a thing. All the coal and stuff," he explained, indicating the ash he was scraping metal scraps from. "Sharpening and decorative work isn't so messy."

"It's weird, I guess I never really thought about it before," she said, her voice kind of distant. "You always look so clean."

He blushed deeper. Most people in their tribe bathed once a week, if they were conscientious. Hiccup always at least washed his face and arms every day. It was a weird habit that he'd never really been able to kick, not that he was going to admit it to Astrid.

Unfortunately, she seemed to be making the connections all by herself. "You must bathe a lot. And I don't see you go with the other guys, so... what, you go into the forest? The lake in the cove?" Her voice was getting kind of strangled, and when Hiccup looked at her, her eyes were a little unfocussed. She was staring at his shoulders again.

"Actually, any bucket of water will do in a pinch," he admitted, since she didn't seem to be paying attention anyway. Surprisingly, she made a small grunt, as if that was an interesting piece of information.

"So you'd have one here, or... or in your room. Which you'd use to... wash," she said vaguely. "Huh."

"Astrid?"

"Hm?"

He straightened up, and it took a while for her gaze to follow him up. When she reached his face, however, she blinked and seemed to come back to herself. "Yes?"

"Are you alright? You seem kind of..." Distant. Sick. Temporarily insane. "...distracted."

"I'm fine," she said. She really didn't sound it. "I just hadn't thought about it before."

"About what? Me... bathing?" he asked, and even as he blushed again,

he had to smother a grin. Somehow, the idea of Astrid thinking of him having a bath and not laughing at the mental image wasâ€¦ kind of appealing.

She seemed to follow his train of thought, because this time she was the one to blush, her shoulders straightening self-consciously. "No, I was justâ€¦" She trailed off, then waved her hand, the gesture ending on her lips. "Sometimes you taste like coal. Never thought about why, before."

"Ta-" He cut himself off, his eyes widening, especially when Astrid lifted her gaze back to his, and he recognised a look that made his arm ache in the nicest way.

He didn't really notice her coming closer, until she was suddenly right in front of him. He definitely noticed it when she kissed him, though.

It happened often enough that Hiccup wasn't usually struck dumb by a kiss anymore, though not enough for him to say it was normal. Whenever she kissed him, it was always brief, though the feeling of it would often linger. Sometimes her kisses felt more like congratulations than real affection.

This was different.

This was slow. Her mouth closed over his bottom lip and tugged a little. He found his head tilting as he copied the action, and it had the added bonus of getting them closer still. Her hands found his arms, and slowly slid up, finger tips scraping against the curve of his bicep before coming to rest on his shoulders. Oddly, considering how that movement had left fire in its wake, he didn't notice his own hands moving until the spikes of Astrid's armour cut into his palms and made him gasp.

The mild pain was almost immediately washed away, because Astrid had taken advantage of his open mouth to suck in his whole bottom lip, her tongue sweeping over his skin, and he was a little bit lost in happy, silly thoughts of 'Astrid, Astrid, Astrid'.

He had no idea how long they stood there. He only vaguely remembered recognising her tongue felt rough, and that she tasted of sweat in the best way ever. He wondered if her tongue would taste the same, because logically it shouldn't, but she might hit him if he tried to taste it, or maybe not, given what she was already doing with it, and wow it was hard to keep a solid train of thought when she did thatâ€¦

Her waist was so small under his hands, but hard. All muscle. He had the strangest thought, in between a white haze of 'fingers on the back of my neck' and a red mist of 'who knew biting could feel good?', that he wanted to bake her a loaf of bread. He wanted to take her flying out to a rock somewhere in the middle of the ocean, and eat bread while they watched the sunset together.

Then there were teeth and thoughts of using his mouth for anything but what Astrid was currently doing seemed utterly insane.

Something stopped them, though for the life of him he had no idea what. Whatever it was, it couldn't have been that important, because

Astrid didn't pull too far away. She stayed where she was, so he could feel her breath mix with his. He wanted to follow her forward and start again, but he had never started a kiss and even now, he wasn't convinced he could get away with it. Besides, there was something intense about Astrid's eyes that he couldn't look away from.

Her fingers rose from his shoulder to touch his face, and Hiccup blinked, caught between confusion and a weird sense of something. Her fingers on his cheek and jaw felt soft in a way Astrid normally wasn't. Despite his best intentions, his eyelids kept fluttering closed, especially when she trailed over the ridge of his eye and down to his mouth.

It was weird.

Nice.

But weird.

When he was finally able to open his eyes again, he met Astrid's gaze, and was slightly concerned to see her looking upset? Angry? Whatever it was, he didn't think it was because of him, so he didn't pull back, but he did turn his head slightly, as if that would help him understand her expression better.

Maybe he normally wouldn't have gotten away with it, but maybe "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," she said, so softly he more felt it in her breath than heard it. "I just"

"What?"

"I didn't see any of this," she murmured. "For so long, I just"

He frowned, not following, but stilled when her other hand came up to his face as well. Her thumb traced the scar on his jaw, and the tougher skin on his cheeks that were all that remained of old burns. Somehow, it felt like she was examining him. Like he was some item she'd found on Johann's boat and she was trying to decide how much he was worth.

In a vaguely detached way, he wondered if he was worth a sheep.

"Astrid?" he asked finally. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah," she breathed, and then leaned forward, kissing him once more. It wasn't like the others — more chaste than what they'd just done, but it lingered, like she was savouring it.

His eyes fluttered open again as she stepped back, just in time to see her push her hair away and smile. "I better go. I'm distracting you."

"Huh? Oh, the cleaning," he said, looking down and around. "Right. Sure. Okay. Are you?" He stopped again to look at her. "Are you sure you're alright?"

"Who me?" She laughed and moved toward him, but then stopped and quickly pulled back. It was oddly disappointing to realise she'd stopped herself from kissing him again. She shoved back her hair and pointedly turned away. "I'll see you at the arena tomorrow."

"Right. Goodnight, Astrid," he said. He felt weirdly off-balance, but tried to shake it off, turning back to his work. He felt eyes on him and glanced over his shoulder, but Astrid only flinched and hurried away.

A moment later, Toothless appeared in the doorway, looking just as confused as Hiccup felt.

"You know, bud, Dad always used to tell me women were crazy," he said, staring out over his dragon's head. "He never said they made you feel the same way."

Toothless grunted his agreement, and Hiccup walked over to pick up a shield and look at himself in the reflection. Not seeing anything different, he went back to Toothless and spread his arms. "Do you think I'm worth a sheep?"

His dragon just stared at him, then huffed and lay down, his head turned away out of disinterest.

"Is that a no?"

Toothless lifted a wing to whack him over the head, and Hiccup stumbled back, taking the admonishment as it was intended. "Right. Cleaning. I can do that. Man, today's been weird."

But, he thought to himself as he started shifting through the ash again, at least he ended up learning something. He wasn't sure what it was, but he'd sure enjoyed the lesson.

\* \* \*

><p><em>Have you ever noticed that, even in the movie when even Fishlegs is covered in grime, Hiccup's always clean? Boy must have some kind of anti-dirt reflector shield to go with his fire-proof skin. Anywayâ€|<em>

End  
file.